



# JFACT

**Jewish Federation Association of Connecticut**  
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March 11, 2010

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Representative Geragosian, Senator Harp and members of the Appropriations committee:

My name is Robert Fishman and I am the Executive Director of the Jewish Federation Association of Connecticut (JFACT) and President of the Connecticut Immigrant and Refugee Coalition, which represents over 20 interfaith and ethnic organizations in our state. On behalf of the Immigrant and Refugee organizations, I urge you to maintain our \$100,000 continued grant for Citizenship Training workshops. We received \$100,000 for this same grant in 2008-2009. We received a contract from DSS for \$100,000 to be funded from November 1, 2009 through October 30, 2010. DSS has paid out half or \$50,000 of this grant as of now and we urge you not to accept the Governor's recommendation to cut 25% or \$25,000 now from this grant. We can understand a small percentage reduction in the 5% range, but not 25%. In addition, we respectfully request funding for the grant for the second part of the year to end by 2011.

This grant to JFACT is shared with and coordinated by the following direct service providers: Catholic Charities Migration and Refugee Services, International Institute of Connecticut, Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services (IRIS), Connecticut Coalition of Mutual Assistance Associations (Southeast Asians), Polish American Congress, Center for Urban Research (West Indian Association) and Jewish Family Services around the state. Twelve separate agencies provide customized citizenship workshops to over thirty ethnic groups with many specializing in serving Elderly immigrants and refugees who have either had problems passing the citizenship test or were afraid to take it. We ask the Appropriations Committee to fund the grant from November 2010 through October 2011 at \$100,000 per year.

These groups have already rehired teachers and started classes for immigrants. We over achieved our goal last year to provide two hundred legal immigrants and refugees in Connecticut the opportunity to participate in a customized citizenship workshop in twelve different locations in the state. Our teachers and volunteers help each immigrant, especially the elderly; learn English, civics and the rights and obligations of U.S. citizens.

We have some success stories of Russian, Polish, Vietnamese and others in their 80's who have sufficiently mastered the material and have passed the test for citizenship. They know this would not be possible without this significant grant. No other agencies or educational institutions provide customized and successful citizenship training.

We also know, and want to share with you, that Refugees and legal immigrants who come to Connecticut almost always remain in our state and their children tend to remain here as well after college. Family is very important to them and in many cases the immigrant child serves the role of parent or the person for their parents and grandparents to go to for help and support.

The state of Connecticut saves money by providing funding to support citizenship. Each immigrant who becomes naturalized now becomes the responsibility of the federal government if they require a safety net basket of medical and other services. I do not think the state has too many other opportunities to spend a relatively small amount of money and save significant dollars on Medical and other care for needy residents of the state.

The Connecticut Immigrant and Refugee Coalition invites you to the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Immigrant Day ceremony on April 20, 2010 at 1pm in the Old Judiciary Room with Dr. Leslie Desmangles of Trinity College Religion Department who is from Haiti.

Thank you for your time.

I am available to answer any questions you may have,

Robert J. Fishman

**The Jewish Federation Association of Connecticut (JFACT) is a statewide Association serving as a legislative representative for the nine Connecticut Jewish Federations and their associated agencies, an advocate for the Jewish Community, a public affairs spokesperson and coordinator on statewide programs on issues of mutual interest and concern in the state of Connecticut and Israel**